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Cuba Episode Believed to Spell End for Dulles' Days as CIA Head

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WASHINGTON, April 26—The Central Intelligence Agency, long a shadowy agency—but perhaps not shadowy enough—in U.S. Foreign Affairs, is heading for a showdown which will give it a new director.

Unquestionably, the days of its chief, Allen W. Dulles, are numbered. The principal question seems to be how gentle President Kennedy will choose to be in replacing him.

At the latest, Dulles will go when the CIA moves its base of top-secret operations to a huge new headquarters in the fall. He may go much before that time.

Spurring a decision, of course, is the debacle into which someone—and informed insistence here finger the CIA—permitted the Kennedy Administration to blunder in its recent Cuban adventure.

Kennedy, understanding rather than vindictive, is not inclined to shame Dulles by forcing his retirement immediately. He even has added the CIA chief to the small group that will help Gen. Maxwell Taylor inquire into the Cuban invasion failure.

But Dulles himself, worried and unhappy, is believed to concede privately that he and his agency must share the responsibility that the President accepts publicly.

One of the Administration's officials bluntly here this week that "very considerable miscalculation" had played a part in the Administration's decision to permit the invasion effort at this time.

Where was the miscalculation? It hardly enters on the record conversation, but in Washington the CIA's role is one of our day's worst-kept secrets. And this, ironically, undoubtedly traces to a key and fatal error in the CIA's prior work with the Cuban invaders—carelessness. The agency got into the picture publicly, and seemingly didn't care too much—because, perhaps, of the matter of credit for staging the invasion that was to unseat Castro.

In an agency such as the CIA this inevitably involves the director personally. And for such a director as Mr. Dulles, who in his eight years has allowed himself to violate another cardinal rule of the intelligence game by becoming something of a public figure, the involvement thereby is compounded.

Obviously weary as well as chagrined this week, Mr. Dulles already is past the time for anticipated retirement. He had hoped that the incoming Kennedy Administration would keep him on, at least for a while. The President, who is said to have contemplated appointing his brother-in-law the Attorney General as CIA chief, went along with Mr. Dulles. Robert Kennedy now is one of the investigators of the Cuban episode.

Now, no matter how Dulles remains, and no matter who his successor may be, the President confronts a major question that strikes right at the heart of the Presidency: how can he provide for an adequate screening of the CIA's findings so as to preclude any "very considerable miscalculation" on some matter of national survival one day.

Such a knotty—seemingly almost insoluble—question in effect overrides even the CIA's two big and expensive bloopers of the past year: the U-2 and now Cuba.

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